

by Debra Kahn Schofield

In order to be a successful salesperson, you must be confident of your product's value and able to break through the mental barriers that prospects build around them. By recognizing and accepting the natural tension and mistrust that potential customers possess, you can begin to build rapport and reduce the barriers.

Establishing Rapport

When meeting with prospects for the first time, it is crucial that you capture their attention. This can only happen if they are actively listening. Be sensitive to mood. If, for example, a prospect seems edgy or distracted, gently inquire as to the cause of their anxiety. Even if they don't want to discuss it, your awareness and concern will help establish rapport. Try to maintain eye contact so that the prospect sees you as a complex human being, not merely someone trying to sell them something. If the prospect seems uncomfortable in your presence, examine your body language. Are you leaning forward too eagerly? Fidgeting? Adjust your body language in order to place the prospect at ease.

Ask prospects about their business, education, hobbies, or interests. You may have to ask several questions before they warm up to you, but once you get them talking, they will become more involved with you. Listen carefully to their answers and ask follow up questions that show you are paying attention.

Reducing Tension

Sometimes Guerrillas are so excited about the product at hand that they forget a prospect may perceive a sales call as an intrusion. Unless a mutual friend refers you, the prospect may not know that you are honest and trustworthy. They may have had prior negative experiences with unethical salespersons and have their guard up.

Accept the fact that some amount of tension is natural and unavoidable. In the few minutes allotted to you, try to establish your credibility and demonstrate that you are confident and capable of providing products and services that will enhance their business. How do you do that? First of all, by believing it whole-heartedly.

If you have any doubts or concerns about your product or your ability to sell, you will undoubtedly convey that to the customer. This is where a positive attitude is critical. Ask yourself whether you believe in your product and your firm. Will your product deliver value to this customer? If the answer to these questions is yes, believe it and reflect it to your prospects and customers. As your self-confidence grows, so will your prospect's confidence in you.

Creating Trust

In order to win trust and respect, assure the prospect that you are a professional. Show up at the sales call on time, dressed appropriately. Try to use humor to break up any tension. If you can relate a brief anecdote that captures attention and casts you in an attractive light, do so. Be polite and keep personal stories to a minimum.

If you are able to create trust, reduce tension, and establish rapport, it will be much easier to get to the business of selling your product.